

NOMENCLATURAL CONSIDERATION OF NICROPHORUS (COLEOPTERA: SILPHIDAE)

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Fabricius (1775) erected a new genus using the name *Nicrophorus* including in it *N. germanicus* (L.) and *N. vulgaris*. The generic name was used subsequently by Fabricius (1776, 1778, 1787, 1792, 1800), Olivier (1790), Latreille (1796) and others not cited here. However, Illiger (1798) used *Necrophorus* and was followed in that spelling in 1801 by Fabricius. Subsequent workers have used the names interchangeably. The Leng Catalogue (1920) used *Necrophorus* but Hatch (1928) used *Nicrophorus*; supplements to the Leng Catalogue retained *Nicrophorus*. *Necrophorus* was acknowledged by Hatch (1932) as an emended spelling, and he further stated, "There is widespread authority for the use of such an emended spelling . . ." but did not mention which should be accepted. Mazokhin-Porshnyakov (1953) used *Necrophorus* and Mrocykowski (1959) used *Nicrophorus*, examples of the most recent new species descriptions using these names. Recently *Necrophorus* has been listed as a junior synonym by Hatch (1957) and Arnett (1961).

Another error was in the use of *Nigrophorus* by Fabricius (1787) on page 48 and *Nicrophorus* on page viii. The International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (1961) states an emendation must be a ". . . demonstrably intentional change in the original spelling . . ." [Art. 33(a)]. *Nigrophorus* does not satisfy this definition since the original spelling was cited in the same publication and cited again by its author (Fabricius) in 1792. The change is therefore unintentional, not an emendation, and as an incorrect subsequent spelling has no nomenclatural status [Art. 33(b)].

If *Necrophorus* is considered an unintentional change then Art. 33(b) applies and the name is rejected, but since the name is used several times by Illiger (1798, pp. 352-355, 498, 508) and Fabricius (1801, pp. xiv, 333) it can be considered an emendation (intentional change).

Emendations are either justified or unjustified. The former ". . . is the correction of an incorrect original spelling . . ." [Art. 33(a)(i)]. "The original spelling of a name is to be retained as the 'correct original spelling' unless there is in the original publication clear evidence of an inadvertent error . . ." [Art. 32(a)(ii)].

This problem seems to be one of transliteration. Transliteration of the Greek νεκρος is Necros and translates, a dead body or corpse; the Greek -phore translates bearer or carrier. The prefix Nicro- translates or transliterates from neither Greek nor Latin. One may presume that *Nicrophorus* was an incorrect transliteration and should have been *Necrophorus* meaning corpse carrier, a habit characteristic of this genus. There is no evidence of a "lapsus calami" since the name *Nicrophorus* was used twice in the original publication (Fabricius 1775, pp. 1, 71) and several times subsequently including Fabricius (1778, p. 111) when *Nicrophorus* was used with the Greek letters νεκροφορος beside it.

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Assuming this to be an incorrect transliteration Art. 32(a)(ii) would apply in stating “. . . (incorrect transliterations . . . are not to be considered inadvertent errors . . .)”; the original spelling should therefore be retained as correct.

By definition, the change made by Illiger (1798) was an unjustified emendation. Art. 33(a)(ii) states, “. . . any other emendation is an ‘unjustified emendation’; the name thus emended has status in nomenclature with its own date and author, and is a junior objective synonym of the name in its original form.”

The correct name is *Nicrophorus* Fabricius, 1775 [Art. 32(a)(ii)], rather than *Necrophorus* Illiger, 1798, a junior objective synonym of the original [Art. 33(a)(ii)]. *Nigrophorus* has no status [Art. 33(b)].

The type-species for *Nicrophorus* is *N. vespillo* (L.); a name listed as a junior synonym of *N. vulgaris* F. in the original publication. The designation was by Latreille (1810, p. 427).

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